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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 2903

INFO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 9183

RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFIS/JJOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USD:SOLIC// IMMEDIATE

RHRMAKS/COMFIFTHFLT IMMEDIATE

RHMFIIU/COMSIXTHFLT IMMEDIATE

RHMFIIU/NGA HQ BETHESDA MD IMMEDIATE

RHMFIS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE

RHHJJAA/JICPAC PEARL HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RHMFIIU/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 5489

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 STATE 086636

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)

AMGT, XD, AF, KPAO, EAID, KDEM

SUBJECT: TFAF01 AFGHAN ELECTION WATCH: SIT REP AND
S/SRAP MEDIA MESSAGING REPORT #1

Operations Center Situation Report

1. Begin Sitrep:

SECURITY INCIDENTS AND INTIMIDATION CONTINUE

(SBU) Though ISAF reports a significant increase in general security incidents during this election period, Embassy Kabul reports few incidents of election-related violence around the country. Whether Kabul's bank attack is election related is unclear (three attackers dead, several police injured). PRTs report insurgent attempts at voter intimidation, including threats of violence in Paktya and Helmand. (BG Tremblay press briefing, Kabul 2427)
AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BANS COVERAGE OF ELECTION VIOLENCE

(SBU) The UN released a statement criticizing the ban. In conversations with senior Afghan officials Embassy Kabul recognized the sovereign rights of the Afghan government, encouraged Afghans to vote, and reinforced free media reporting linked to the credibility of elections. (TFAF01/Embassy Kabul telcon)

NO NEW CLAIMS OF FRAUD, CONCERNS CONTINUE

(SBU) Afghanistan's Electoral Complaints Commission logged no substantiated claims of fraud. However, the Ghani campaign publicly complained news coverage of President Karzai appears campaign related. PRT Helmand contacts report the Karzai camp continues to ignore the 48 hour moratorium on campaigning to influence voters in Helmand. (Task Force/Embassy Kabul telcon)
CONFLICTING PREDICTIONS ON EXPECTED VOTER TURNOUT

(SBU) Afghanistan's Independent Elections Commission (IEC) expects 15 million of 17 million registered voters to cast ballots. In 2004, 6 million out of 11 million registered voters turned out. IEC estimates might be overly optimistic, in view of conflicting reports of voter apathy, especially in the south. (TFAF01/Embassy Kabul telcon)
REGIONAL REPORTS

(SBU) RC-South HELMAND: Lashkar Gah residents fear suicide and IED attacks August 20. Most Helmandis do not expect high voter turnout due to intimidation and voter apathy. (Kabul 2427)

(SBU) RC-EAST NURISTAN: Attacks have limited opportunities to go to the polls in Kamdesh and Waygul districts, and shut out ballot delivery in Mandol district, affecting an estimated 6,000 voters. Enthusiasm remains high, despite insecurity. (Kabul 2427)

S/SRAP Media Messaging

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12. Begin Messaging:

Please find attached coordinated media messaging guidelines regarding the Afghan elections. This messaging has been cleared for public use throughout the Department and interagency. Updates will follow by 0600 and 1600 daily for the duration of the Department's Afghan Election Task Force.

SRAP: SUMMARY OF UPCOMING EVENTS
Aug 19, 2230 (EDT): Polling begins
Aug 20, 0330 (EDT): IEC press conference
Aug 20, 0730 (EDT): Polling ends
Aug 20, 0930 (EDT): FEFA press conference
Aug 20, 1030 (EDT): NATO Secretary General Rasmussen press statement in Brussels
SRAP: MESSAGING

(U) MEDIA RESTRICTIONS: We are aware of the Afghan Government's statements calling on all media to refrain from reporting any incidents of violence during election day. While we recognize the sovereign rights of the Afghan Government and note their intention to encourage Afghans to turn out and vote, we believe that free media reporting is directly linked to the credibility of the elections and continue to support both the freedom of the press and responsible reporting. We are engaging with Afghan authorities on these concerns.

(U) INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE: As expected, insurgents are attempting to intimidate voters and disrupt the process. The Afghan and international security forces are working closely together to provide voting site security on polling day. Conditions are challenging. We strongly support the rights of all Afghans to choose their own leaders.

(U) ELECTION SECURITY: The Government of Afghanistan is the lead for election security, with over 160,000 police and army soldiers manning polling stations and travel

routes. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) along with U.S. forces support Afghan forces' security efforts. ISAF and USFOR-A have made the elections their primary mission and are working closely with their Afghan partners to enable the election day events.

(U) JUDGING LEGITIMACY: Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission will publish preliminary results and there is a process in place to deal with any complaints. We look forward to reports from independent Afghan and international observer missions.

(U) FRAUD/OBSERVERS: We will be watching closely as the voting and election unfold. The U.S. is funding over 360 observers from independent international NGOs and from Embassy Kabul to observe the process. These U.S. funded observers will be present in 29 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

(U) U.S. IMPARTIAL: The U.S. has been working to support credible, secure, and inclusive elections that are seen by the Afghan people and international

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SUBJECT: TFAF01 AFGHAN ELECTION WATCH: SIT REP AND S/SRAP MEDIA MESSAGING REPORT
community as legitimate. The U.S. does not support or oppose any candidate in the upcoming elections in Afghanistan. We are impartial.

13. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
CLINTON